# Girl Bands to Voice Actor Radio: Romantic and Platonic Yuri from Present to Future

*left: screenshot from Jellyfish Can't Swim in the Night series finale; middle: screenshot from episode 10 of Whisper Me a Love Song; right: screenshot from final song in the Girls Band Cry series finale*

In my recent post, I examined similarities and differences between five new anime: *Train to the End of the World*, *Whisper Me a Love Song*, *The Many Sides of Voice Actor Radio*, *Jellyfish Can't Swim in the Night* (also known as *YoruKura*), and *Girls Band Cry*. This post continues this analysis, noting how the last three of these series listed share a similar focus on girl bands. However, only *Whisper Me a Love Song* is romantic yuri, as is *Girls Band Cry* (to an extent). The other three are what I'll call "platonic yuri," a term I am borrowing from an online forum. Some, like Yuricon founder Erica Friedman, describe the latter as "intimate friendships" or "romantic friendships." Such a focus on "female friendships" arguably falls under the definition of yuri. Hence it should be separated from yuri of the romantic variety.

*Girls Band Cry* and *Jellyfish Can't Swim in the Night* vibe with one another. *Whisper Me a Love Song* featured a band which played music echoing light music performed throughout *K-On!*. The former series was based on a manga, like *The Many Sides of Voice Actor Radio*. *Girls Band Cry*, *Train to the End of the World*, and *Jellyfish Can't Swim in the Night* were original series. In fact, the manga for *Train to the End of the World* only premiered slightly before the series. The *Jellyfish Can't Swim in the Night* manga and light novel began after the series release. *Whisper Me a Love Song* had a lot of potential, but the production didn't keep up with the writing, even though the music, themes about romance (and what it means), and voices were decent.[1]

For some time, I had been looking forward to this yuri anime. I read some of the original manga, but I didn't finish it. Production issues with the series are not unique, but it's common

1 Erica Friedman argued in a recent post that ILTV had a "visibly very low production budget" and said she hoped that "Ichijinsha stops trying to make anime on a shoestring. It makes it harder to tell people that it's worth it to watch."

throughout the anime industry. *I'm in Love with the Villainess* reportedly had such issues last year. At the same time, the show's animation, despite production issues, pulls you into the story as does the music. Hana Shimano, in her first major voice role as Himari Kino, is flanked by Asami Seto. She's just as talented. She voices Yori Asanagi. Aoi Koga, Mikako Komatsu, Konomi Kohara and Ai Kakuma add their voices to this mix, making the series that much better.

*Whisper Me a Love Song* begins with Himaro falling in love with a senior at her high school, Yori, when she sees her play guitar at a school assembly. Her friend, Miki Mizuguchi helps her, and her sister, Aki Mizuguchi, is a bassist in SSGirls, a light music band. That group also includes Mari Tsutsui as drummer and Kaori Tachibana as keyboardist. At the same time, Yori begins to have romantic feelings for Himari. Miki, Aki, and Mari are excited for her, even attempting to bribe her so she will continue playing with SSGirls.

Watch here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8D2ih-L8XOs

In episodes beyond this, the series powerfully focuses on what love really means. Himari admits she is a huge fan of Yori but didn't fall in love with Yori for "real," while Yori finds Himari "cute." The romantic feelings between them strengthen, with Yori determined to make Himari reciprocate her feelings (she does). She even rejoins the band (despite her stage fright) so she can win over Himari. As

such, the series connects to discussions in asexual circles about the meaning of romance and love. In addition, I liked characters like Momoka, who is a member of the show's cooking club, and supports Himari, after she becomes a member.

After the eighth episode, Himari attempts to make Shiho, Yori, Aki, Mari, Momoka, Hajime, and Kaori friends *again*, even though its an uphill battle. She meets Shiho who is working at a high-end restaurant to earn money for her band. In the process, Himari becomes Shiho's friend and learns how Shiho got into music. It began with violin. She was "beaten" by a more-skilled Kyou (voiced by Tōyama). She moved on to guitar because she *had* to play something. Himari remains determined to make Shiho open up to others. In the ninth episode, she becomes band manager for Lauraley as a result, even as she *remains* Yori's girlfriend. Then, in the tenth episode she learns *why* Lauraley was formed. Not long after, Shiho inadvertently admits that she has a crush on Aki! It is implied *this* is why she detests Yori.

Surely, *Whisper Me a Love Song* does a great job at exploring what love means, even after Yori and Himari admit their love to one another. Aki has a crush on Yori (and has to suppress those feelings). She tries to get in the way of the Yori / Himari romance. A more promising plotlines Shiho's challenge to SSGirls, with her band Lauraley, even though she has an outwardly toxic personality, akin to *BanG Dream! It's My Go!!!!* characters. Even so, *Girls Band Cry*, *Jellyfish Swim in the Night*, and *The Mary Sides of Voice Actor Radio*, are better executed, animated, and produced, and cover more pertinent social issues. The latter series centers around characters voiced by seasoned voice actors Moe Toyota and Miku Itō.

In an almost enemies-to-lovers / rivals-to-lovers set up, Yumiko Sato and Chika Watanabe co-host a weekly radio show. They appear to be friends, under the stage names Yasumi Utatane (for Yumiko) and Yuhi Yugure (for Chika), without any issues to their listeners. However, off the air, they are at each other's throats, even in the classroom! Both go through testy waters of friendship and rivalry, competing with one another in a cut-throat show-business environment. Chika and Yumiko both hide parts of their real selves. Yumiko is a gyaru and Chika is a "plain girl." Asaka Mrei assists them. She writes for the radio show that Yumiko and Chika co-host. Later, the latter two characters share their insecurities and closely bond.

Watch here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G30rfLUbDR0

I liked how Yumiko and Chika play off one another, as yuri themes between them blossom. They support one another when the other is down. Their dynamic is something that pulls you into the show. This series reminds me of the difference between real and manufactured personalities of those in *Yuri is My Job!* or concept of honne and tatamae. Some disliked the series, criticizing its writing, storyboards, and character designs, or said it is rushed in comparison to the manga. Even so, I enjoyed this series immensely. The series did a great job highlighting brutality within the voice acting industry by focusing on overwork, toughness of voice acting, hard-ass voice directors, and how voice actors compete with one another.

Lastly, *The Mary Sides of Voice Actor Radio* echoes the darkness inherent in *Oshi no Ko* since stalking of voice actors is an important sub-theme for a few episodes. Even Chika punches a male student in class, chastising him for revealing private parts of her life without consent, and acting like she is the one causing harm. It is a statement of sorts against idol culture.

Yumiko does a video defending Chika, demanding her fans help her. Chika reveals that the show director is her father! They both decide to drop their personas and continue the radio show.

Yumiko apologizes for her "rash" action but does *not* regret it. Yumiko and Chika put on disguises to confuse onlookers, and somehow succeed. Fan loyalty becomes a key issue.

The ninth episode goes further, with Yumiko told to "summon" the character (and its emotions) she wants to voice. In the tenth episode, Yumiko has to do a lot of retakes and struggles to keep up with other voice actors. In the 11th episode, Yumiko is put under lots of pressure to do the *best* performance possible by a fellow voice actor and the show's director. She starts to lose it and tries to calm herself down. In the end, she asks Chika for help, and Chika agrees to help her. In the series finale, Yumiko sees Chika as "cool" after she tells her to *win* the mental game against her fellow voice actors. She ends up acing her performance. In a final scene, Chika says she still doesn't like Yumiko, and will *never* consider her a friend but *only* an "eternal rival."

watch here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zK3tqEnm-Gs

Although I thoroughly enjoyed *The Many Sides of Voice Actor Radio*, I think that *Jellyfish Can't Swim in the Night* is better constructed. Even so, the ending could have been stronger (in terms of yuri themes) and more episodes would have helped expand plotlines. The series features wonderful voice actresses Miku Itō, Miyu Tomita, Rie Takahashi, and Miyuri Shimabukuro. Series music is probably better than the light music played in *Whisper Me a Love Song.* It's only beaten by the wild (and

passionate) music in *Girls Band Cry*. It is no understatement to say that *Jellyfish Can't Swim in the Night* blew me away in more ways than one, through the music, story, visuals, outward (platonic) yuri themes, and voice acting.

Each of the protagonists becomes intertwined in the lives of the other. They want to break away from what chains them down. Mahiru Kōzuki is a high school girl who stopped drawing as "Yoru Mitsuki," but wants to be someone other than herself after she imagines a terrible future work life. Her VTuber friend, Kiui Watase, wants to prove herself as "Nox Ryūgasaki." Yoru learns more about herself. She meets a former badass idol, Kano Yamanouchi, also known as Nonoka Tachibana, a big fan of her work. Both form an anonymous artist group named "JELEE," based on Yoru's drawing of a jellyfish and begin to bond. The opening and closing songs hook you in. The latter tells something about the show's characters and their motivations, as does the music throughout. In fact, the music, especially when mixed with visuals, is a series strong point.

As *Jellyfish Can't Swim in the Night* goes on, Kano and Yoru meet with a mysterious composer, Mei "Kim Anouk" Takanashi, and Kiui, with any fan service fading into the background. Mei acts like a mega-fan of JELEE, akin to Eripiyo in *If My Favorite Pop Idol Made it to the Budokan I Would Die*, who provides *all* she can to Maina. Predictably, Kano and Mei connect. The truth about Kiui is revealed: that she stopped coming to school after her middle-school debut failed. In the process, they all meet together, and release songs, accompanied by Yoru's art. On the other hand, their insecurities bubble to the surface.

The series' latter half brings Kano and Yoru closer together. Kano reassures Yoru that her art is wonderful and that she shouldn't be ashamed of it. She kisses her on the kiss at the end of the fifth episode. They seemingly admit their feelings for one another. Their closeness is reflected in the show's official art. Through it all, there's the parallel to the underground idol Miiko who lied about everything to maintain an image. She's actually a 31-year-old divorced woman with a kid. Kano says the kiss was a "spur of the moment" thing. Tensions between Kano and Yoru grow, as does angst. Kano lashes out at Yoru after she accepts a job for Sundolls (a group managed by Kano's controlling mother), and leaves JELEE behind!

Watch here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nm-50XXPnoU&pp=ygUkamVsbHlmaXNoIGNhbid0IHN3aW0gaW4gdGhlIG5pZ2h0IG9w

The tenth episode is one of the best, as it seems JELEE is going to fall apart. Kano realizes, rightly, she was using Yoru for her own gain. In one of the most poignant parts of the episode, Mei confesses she *loves* Kano over a livestream, and they decide to *not* disband JELEE. The 11th episode goes even further, with Mei and Kano bonding. Yoru also defends Kiui in front of their old school "friends," which causes Kiui to criticize them. She shouts at them, declaring she created her own looks, her own personality, and she *arguably* comes out as non-binary (since her avatar is male). This is one of the best sequences in this platonic yuri series.

Later, Yoru changes pronouns she uses for Kiui. In the final episode, everything comes full circle with a JELEE-Sunflower Dolls collaboration. Yoru and Kano apologize to another and make up. Kano's mother recognizes her and congratulates her on graduating. Plot threads are wrapped up. JELEE reforms. They happily repaint Yoru's mural, making it something that they *all* did together. The series could have a stronger ending, with romantic (rather than platonic) yuri themes, and have *more* episodes. As such, I agree with what Yuri Anime News said, in part: "this anime did such a great job of

surprising us...we had hoped it would go even further," like with a kiss. Erica Friedman had a more critical view, following the finale.[2]

This ambiguity has led some to say that the feelings between Kano and Mahiru were "open to interpretation," based on a faulty translation of a recent interview. While I disagree with such an interpretation, there is undoubtedly enough ambiguity that that the series squarely falls into the platonic yuri category. In any case, *Flip Flappers* was a (romantic) yuri series, while *RIN: Daughters of Mnemosyne* and *Carole & Tuesday* didn't necessarily treat LGBTQ+ characters well. This could be why Takeshita would say the latter comment about "interpretation." Perhaps it was also a way to shield themselves from criticism that the series did not end was well as it *could* have.

Last but not least is *Girls Band Cry*. This wild music anime tops *any* other anime this year. It is unlikely to be dethroned. Partially romantic yuri themes / subtext are integral. This is assisted by voice actresses such as Rina, Yuri, Mirei, Natsu, and Syuri. They part of an all-female rock band. Although CGI could be off-putting to some viewers, this series uses it so effectively that it isn't an issue to anyone watching. This is clear from the *amazing* opening sequence. *Girls Band Cry* doesn't have a strange animation style like the newest season of *Laid-Back Camp*. This series shines through with its themes, animation, characters, and music in many ways.

2 In her post on June 27, she said that this was "another surprising season of anime with a number of Yuri, Yuri-adjacent and Yuri-adjacent-adjacent series" and said that a cavalier attitude toward yuri colored how fans feel about the end of *Jellyfish*, calling it "an otherwise good story about finding people who help you accept yourself and whom you can accept in return." While I wouldn't be as jaded as she was and say it *wasn't* a yuri anime (I would say it was a platonic yuri anime), her general thoughts align with what I thought about the series.

Watch here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YDLafQ-Rg-k&list=PL0o9aWyhb7ocxwDBYhzukikXmlB7SwXgm&index=1

This anime follows Nina Iseri, who leaves behind her family problems and other issues, finding herself in Tokyo. Looking for a better future, she comes upon a guitarist named Momoka Kawaragi, who has lost her spark and wants to quit. Nina convinces her to *not* run away and both begin playing together. Later, she tries to juggle her many responsibilities. She reveals that she dropped out of school after being bullied. Then she meets a drummer named Suburu Awa. As for Nina, she often socially self-destructs and puts her rage into the music. Chaos and disorder are a common theme in the series, from the band reforming and breaking apart. This mixes with tension between Momoka and Nina, or Suburu and Nina, and the dynamics that other characters bring to the table.

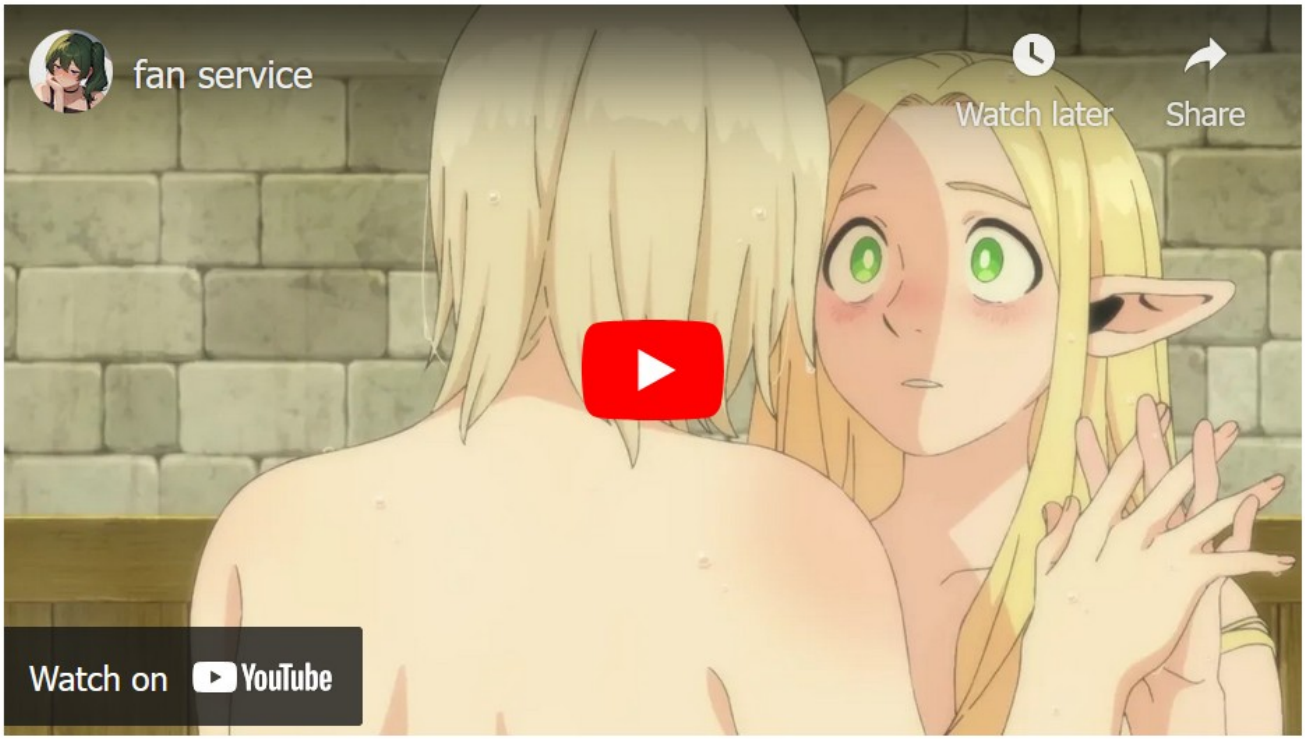
For me, this instability is why *Girls Band Cry* reminds me a lot of *BanG Dream! It's My GO!!!!*. The tension between the past and present, and one's social and family obligations is a major theme. For instance, Momoka has unresolved feelings toward Diamond Dust, her former band. Suburu wants to spend time with her uptight grandma, Tendo Awa, and believes she should be an actress. Through it all, they wonder what it means to be a band, a discussion which comes to fore even more when Rupa and Tomo come onto the scene. Later episodes go further, with focus on self-expression, dropping out of

school (for Nina), bullying, and confessing one's feelings (Nina admitting her feelings for Momoka who reciprocates).

The ninth and tenth episodes are tension-filled. Tomo tells Nina that she sucks at playing guitar. Prior to this, she's afraid to share her *real* thoughts on people's musical abilities due to previous bad band experiences. In the next episode, an agency representative, Shioma Miuri, fails to get the band signed. Nina visits her parents, who are worried about her. She admits to her sister that she *wanted* to kill herself, indicating that she *is* as vulnerable as anyone else. Her reconciliation with them is successful. This leads to a more productive band, with everyone working together and their music-playing syncing, in the 11th episode, with less tension than previously. In the next-to-last episode, their band gets signed with Miuri's agency. Subsequently, they have songwriting sessions and Nina helps Momoka deal with her anxiety.[3]

It's a crime that no streaming service has officially licensed this series in English, not even Crunchyroll or HIDIVE. The latter are two anime-centered streaming services with English licenses. Netflix and Hulu/Disney+ compete with them. It's mind-boggling that this series hasn't even received a YouTube release! The question remains: why is this anime (and its soundtrack) being released, without getting the full "potential for success?" It's surely a waste. Toei Animation doesn't care about making the series available to a global audience. As such, *Girls Band Cry* can *only* be watched on less-than-legal sites outside of Japan or streamed in some other countries.

3 In the final episode, Nina tells them they need to gather their *own* audience and not depend on Diamond Dust for help. They even decide to withdraw from the agency and go solo, playing on their own terms. As one commenter noted in his review of the show, "the Yuri went as far as it could in original anime that do not have the Yuri tag and it satisfied me."




Watch here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zq4SQ_5XsHw

*Whisper Me a Love Song*, *The Many Sides of Voice Actor Radio*, *Jellyfish Can't Swim in the Night*, *Girls Band Cry*, and *Train to the End of the World* are only some series with yuri themes which aired this year, with more platonic yuri than romantic yuri. Hopefully these series get continued beyond one season.

This year, a magical girl series (*Soaring Sky: Pretty Cure!*), a mahjong series (*Pon No Michi*), an idol series (*Himitsu no AiPri*), an adventure cooking fantasy comedy (*Dungeon Meshi / Delicious in Dungeon*) shown in the above clip, a fantasy comedy (*Tis Time for "Torture," Princess*), a girls cycling series *(Rinkai!)*, an isekai comedy *(A Salad Bowl of Eccentrics*), season two of a chibi idol series (*Nijiyon Animation*), season three of an adventure iyashikei (*Laid-Back Camp)*, and a mecha sci-fi cyberpunk series (*Metallic Rouge)* all ended. Season three of an idol series (*Love Live! Superstar!!)* will air in October. These series primarily have platonic yuri themes. *Beloved Zako Streamer* and *Gushing Over Magical Girls* have more direct yuri themes. This could also be called "romantic yuri."

This follows series like the problematic *The Vexations of a Shut-In Vampire Princess*, judo anime *Ippon Again!*, latest iteration of the *D4DJ* franchise (*D4DJ All Mix*), *BanG Dream! It's*

*MyGo!!!!!*, *Stardust Telepath*, *Shy*, *Yohane the Parhelion: Sunshine in Mirror*, *Otaku Elf*, *Yuri Is My Job!*, *Skip and Loafer*, *I'm in Love with the Villainess*, *Kuma Kuma Kuma Bear*, *The Magical Revolution of the Reincarnated Princess and the Genius Young Lady*, and *Birdie Wing: Golf Girls' Story*, many of which had direct yuri themes (others only had subtext), last year, along with others in recent years.[4]

There's some upcoming yuri series, likely with platonic yuri. For instance, Miku Itō, who voiced protagonists of *Jellyfish Can't Swim in the Night* and *The Many Sides of Voice Actor Radio*, as noted earlier, will be voicing Megumi Kaionji in *Narenare: Cheer for You!* (also known as *Nanare Hananare* or *Be a Vegetable, Be a Flower*) and Chizuko Date in *Acro Trip* this year. While the latter series, will premiere in October, the former, an original series centered around six girl cheerleaders, will premiere next month, on July 7.

Social media users noted it features a Japanese-Brazilian blond girl "who seems to like kissing other girls a little too much." It's hard to know whether yuri themes will be direct, indirect, or filled with fan service. The series also features Koudai Kakimoto (previously directed *BanG Dream! It's My Go!!!!!*) and well-known yuri writer Ayana Yuniko (sometimes called Yuniko Ayana). Another writer is Midori Goto, formerly a script writer for *BanG Dream! It's MyGO!!!!!* and two *BanG Dream!* movies.

4 I'm specifically referring to, in 2022: *Akebi's Sailor Uniform* [subtext], *Princess Connect! Re:Dive* (season 2) [subtext], *Love Live! Nijigasaki High School Idol Club* (season 2) [subtext], *The Executioner and Her Way of Life* [direct], *Healer Girl* [subtext], *Birdie Wing: Golf Girls' Story* [subtext], *Komi Can't Communicate* (season 2) [subtext], *The Demon Girl Next Door* (season 2) [subtext], *Lycoris Recoil* [subtext], *RWBY: Ice Queendom* [subtext], *Luminous Witches* [subtext], *Tokyo Mew Mew New* [subtext], *Shine Post* [subtext], *Love Live! Superstar!!* (season 2) [subtext], *BanG Dream! Morfonication* [subtext], *My Master Has No Tail* [subtext], *Mobile Suit Gundam: The Witch from Mercury* [direct], *Management of a Novice Alchemist* [subtext], *Encouragement of Climb: Next Summit* [subtext], *Do It Yourself!!* [subtext], and *Bocchi the Rock!* [subtext]. There were many more from previous years, like *Otherside Picnic*, *Tropical-Rouge! Pretty Cure*, *The Aquatope on White Sand*, and *Adachi and Shimamura*.

Watch here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JFt7WOh3gXs&pp=ygUYTmFyZW5hcmU6IENoZWVyIGZvciBZb3Uh

Actresses Yuki Nakashima, Larissa Tago Takeda, Anna Aveiro, Nodoka Ōtani, and Shion Tanizaki in *Narenare* respectfully, have previously voiced characters in other yuri series. This includes Lisa Imai in *BanG Dream!* (Nakashima), Sumire Miyazaki in *Happy Sugar Life* (Takeda), Euphyllia Magenta in *The Magical Revolution of the Reincarnated Princess and the Genius Young Lady* (Iwami), Kokona Ōtori in *World Dai Star* (Iwami), Sakuna Memoir in *The Vexations of a Shut-in Vampire Princess* (Iwami), and Akari Tokitō in *The Executioner and Her Way of Life* (Kahara). The other known voice actress for the series is Rika Nakagawa. She voiced Momiji Itou in *Shine Post*, a yurish series which released in 2022.

OG-Man, who runs the site *The Yuri Empire*, listed *Mayonaka Punch* (releasing on July 8), an original anime, second season of *Shy* (releasing sometimes in July), *VTuber Legend* (releasing on July 7), and *My Deer Friend Nokotan* (releasing on July 7) in their summer picks for this year. It remains to be seen if any of these, apart from *Shy* (which had yuri subtext in season 1), will have yuri themes. *My Deer Friend Nokotan* may have "girl x girl crumbs" as some on social media are claiming and seems

the case from the first episode. Next year, the music anime *BanG Dream! Ave Mujica* will air (in January), as will *Momentary Lily*.

Sometime in 2025, the girl's golf series, *Sorairo Utility*, along with season two of *Shy*, an anime about bowling (*Turkey!*), an anime about working girls (*A Smile in an Unbearable Workplace*), a coming of age anime (*Hana wa Saku, Shura no Gotoku*, also known as *Flower and Asura*), and second season of *I've Been Killing Slimes for 300 Years and Maxed Out My Level*, will air. In addition, an anime adaptation of *Bad Girl*, a comedic manga reportedly with yuri themes, was recently announced. Others report that *There's No Freaking Way I'll be Your Lover! Unless…* will be getting an anime adaptation.

© 2024 Burkely Hermann. All rights reserved.